

## Progress in Innovation: 100,000 Strong in the Americas

President Obama launched *100,000 Strong in the Americas* in 2011 to help build a stronger 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, enhance competitiveness, and expand engagement in the Western Hemisphere. The initiative aims to achieve these goals by increasing student exchange to 100,000 students traveling in each direction between the U.S. and the rest of the Americas by 2020.

A key part of the *100,000 Strong* strategy is building educational exchange capacity and linkages between U.S. and regional higher education institutions (HEI). The most successful strategy for implementing this vision has been the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund. The Innovation Fund is implemented through a unique public-private partnership among the U.S. State Department, Partners of the Americas, and NAFSA: Association of International Educators, with the generous support of private sector companies and foundations.

Through the Innovation Fund, universities leverage partnerships that promote new study abroad programs in areas as diverse as ecosystem sustainability, Mayan culture, women and STEM, mine engineering, sustainable agriculture, Spanish and Portuguese language study, and nutritional science, among others.

In its first year (2014), the Innovation Fund has achieved:

- \$4.75 million in public and private sector contributions made to the Innovation Fund, and over \$1 million awarded to HEIs.
- For every \$1 provided by the Innovation Fund, winning institutions leverage \$1.60, meaning an average institutional match of \$40,000 for every \$25,000 Innovation Fund grant. A \$1200 investment enables one student to study abroad.
- 48 grants have been awarded to teams of 110 HEIs from 16 countries in the region.

Since the launch of *100,000 Strong in the Americas* in 2011, the number of U.S. students studying abroad in Latin America and the Caribbean has increased 12 percent (to 45,473) and the number of students from Latin America and the Caribbean studying in the United States has grown by 13 percent (to 72,318).<sup>1</sup>

This is President Obama's vision for *100,000 Strong in the Americas*: business, higher education, and government coming together to ensure that students across the Americas have the opportunities necessary to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Only by studying, learning, and working together can we prosper together.

Meet the winners of the first 6 rounds of the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund competitions:

<http://100kstrongamericas.org/meet-the-winners>

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for International Education, 2014 Open Doors Report (<http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors>)

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